

INTERVIEW WITH VERNA F. PORTER

Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

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Katherine Burmeister

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Dodson: Would you, for our record, state your full name and tell us how long you've lived in the valley?

Porter: I'm Verna Frachtling Porter and I've lived in the valley 68 years.

Dodson: Well, does that just about cover your life-span then?

Porter: Yes, it does. My folks came here in 1914 and I was born in the L.A. area and we came out in the valley when I was a baby.

Dodson: I see. So, your period in southern California has been in the valley, not just in other parts of the county?

Porter: No. I've lived in the San Fernando valley all of my life.

Burmeister: Mrs. Porter, since you've lived here all of your life you've had the chance to go through the school system. Can you tell us something about your early education?

Porter: Well, I did all of my schooling in Van Nuys. We lived on the north end of the valley and so everything we did, really, was in the city of Van Nuys. All our schooling was in the elementary and Junior and Senior High school. The Junior and Senior High school were together, of course, in those days. You had the 7th through the 12th grade all in the same school. The elementary school is still on the same grounds, although

it has changed some since then.

Dodson: What elementary school would ~~that~~ be?

Porter: That would be the Van Nuys elementary school.

Dodson: Where is that located Mrs. Porter?

Porter: Uh, it's on Sylmar street between, uh, you got me. Well, anyway, it's on Sylmar street right in the middle of Van Nuys. Can't remember the cross street. Gilmore, Hamlin?

Burmeister: Is that near Sherman Way?

Porter: No, no, no. No, it's right downtown. It's either on the corner of Gilmore or Hamlin on Sylmar in Van Nuys. I don't recall the number of people in school at all but I remember Mrs. Stearns [sp ?] was, Mrs. Oleitha Stearns was the principal and she is still living in the Los Angeles area, I believe. Our Kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Van Winkle whose husband's family were old timers in the valley. She is still living in the Van Nuys area also.

Dodson: Do you remember any of your classmates who have become well-known business leaders in the valley or political figures?

Porter: Uh, well, I can't remember whether they went all through elementary school with us but, um, there's Jeff High [sp ?] who is an attorney in Van Nuys

and then, we went to school with the Allington boys who are in business in Van Nuys. And, of course, there was Jane Russel went to high school with us all, you know. And she has become quite a figure, you know. [laughing.] Also, let's see, I'm not very good at remembering these things. I can't think of anyone else offhand real quickly that I would remember.

Dodson: Here at the church, I imagine you meet alot of young people and children in elementary school, junior high, and high school. Can you tell us whether there's any difference that you see in them? Between them and your classmates?

Porter: Yes, I see a great deal. Particularly, the style of clothing. That is one thing. It's very casual compared to when we went to school. As a matter of fact, when we were first in high school we wore uniforms to school; blouses and skirts. This was a public school. It was not a parochial school or anything. This was Van Nuys high school. We were required to wear uniforms to school in those days. Then in the early thirties, why, this changed and we could wear anything we wanted to school. Also, I don't know, it seems like education is much more loose or free than when we were in school. There was much more demand on us than there seems to be on the students today. Pressure was much more on us than they seem to have today, or at least, maybe we felt it more but we certainly had pressure at that time to be the very best. Now it seems like it's a much more relaxed situation for the children to learn in.



Dodson: Do you think there's any change in discipline since then? Did you have much vandalism and arson and that sort of thing when you were in school?

Porter: We wouldn't ever consider that type of thing when we were in school; either in school or in churches. Today, we find so much of. Uh, we wouldn't even consider speaking back to a teacher. I can remember in elementary school if you talked too much you got your mouth taped. I got that quite often.

Dodson: I can imagine that any teacher who did that today would be faced with a law suit.

Porter: That's right. Discipline was much more strict and we, uh, we respected the teachers. The teachers were to be respected and I can assure you that if the parents found out the child didn't last long without going to the woodshed.

Dodson: So you see quite a difference there?

Porter: Yes.

Dodson: And you also feel that the courses were harder that more was asked of the student then than now?

Porter: I think so. Secondly, I think too that just as a social status you were expected to be a top student, you know. Whereas, nowadays you are accepted no matter what. In those days, if you weren't in that certain group, education wise, you weren't accepted socially either. That was difficult too.

Dodson: Do you think that we have a higher percentage of students going to school now then then. That, maybe, we've become more democratic in that way and perhaps it has caused a certain lessening of standards ?

Porter: Perhaps? Totally, yes. Now, it just so happens that within our family education was a must and we were made to feel that this was very important in ours lives and that you didn't quit school you kept on going til you graduated. I do realize that there were many youths who were in my age level that did not finish school and, I don't know, that seemed always to surprise me because school was very important to us. We, all of us, finished high school and part of us went on to finish college.

Dodson: We have a rather heavy dropout rate, in college particularly. Do you feel that that was true of the past?

Porter: Well, of course, a college education was not a thing you could afford in those days. You see, we grew up during the depression time and you really struggled if you got through any part of college. I a happened to grow up in a family with seven children and it was very difficult for my parents just to keep us maintained feeding and clothing us much less sending us on to college. If we went to college we had to work. We even worked then anyway to get spending money for ourselves. So, I feel that, within my own family I know I find that children have not felt the

importance of education that we felt.

Dodson: Do you remember any particular teachers that you felt influenced your life in any way or were inspirations?

Porter: Yes. My kindergarten teacher, and I think partly this is because as we were growing older she continued to be a part of our family relationship and was very concerned about us and I think she had a great deal of influence on all of our lives. And, I think my fourth grade teacher, Mrs., Miss Zerinski [sp ?] was a very warm person who felt, she encouraged you at every point to be the best you could and uh, I think this was good. Then there was Mrs. Larkey, when we were in high school who was the same kind of a person almost and Mr. Rankle who was a teacher in high school who was our bookkeeping teacher and he was also the kind of person who went beyond the teaching part. This is the thing that I think we felt when we were in school too, there were so many teachers that were dedicated to teaching that I don't see altogether today.

Burmeister: What was your kindergarten teacher's name again, please?

Porter: Mrs. Van Winkle.

Burmeister: Do you remember Pierce college?

Porter: Yes.



Burmeister: As an agricultural college?

Porter: Yes. When it first began that's all it was.

Burmeister: Do remember the year?

Porter: No, I don't remember the year. That's what I said when I started. I'm terrible at remembering years.

Dodson: I'm not sure but would the 1940's sound about right? Or was it a little later?

Porter: It seems a little early to me, but, as I say I'm not very good at years. Time goes so quickly, but that seems early to me. It seems like it would have been later. Late '40's anyway. Early '50's maybe.

Dodson: At that time did the valley seem to be so agricultural in its orientation that an agricultural college was desirable?

Porter: Oh, yes. Of course, the valley has always been agricultural until about the end of the war. That's when, really, the growth in the valley came. The west valley even didn't grow as fast as the east valley. The west valley has grown more in the last ten years. Actually, our nearest neighbors were a mile away when we first came to the valley.

Dodson: What year would that have been?



- Porter: 1914. 1914 my folks moved to Roscoe Boulevard in what is now the Panorama City area. It was North Van Nuys in those days.
- Dodson: And your nearest neighbors were a mile away at that time?
- Porter: About a mile away. That was our nearest neighbor. Until, as I say, the most recent years neighbors were very scarce. You knew all your neighbors and for miles around. Whereas, today you don't even know who lives on your own block. You see, all of Panorama City was a ranch. Anything east of Van Nuys Boulevard from Woodland was one large ranch. There were no homes in there at all except the care-takers homes on the property. It was a dairy ranch.
- Dodson: Do you remember the name of the owner?
- Porter: Uh, well, no I don't. I can't remember his name. Platt? No, that was the other ranch out here. No, I don't remember the name at all. You see, that property went from Van Nuys Blvd to Woodland, from the railroad tracks on the south, to Parthenia street on the north. It's now, the housing part, is a big percentage of Panorama City. All the days we were growing up it was a ranch. The valley had lots of big ranches like that. So, the agricultural college was, really, an expected thing almost.
- Dodson: Did the P.E. go through here at that time?

Porter: Well, in the early days the P.E. did not go through here, no. As a matter of fact, my father worked in Los Angeles and he had to go to [inaudible] street in Van Nuys. On Van Nuys Blvd to catch the P.E. car into L.A. and later, as I say, I'm no good at these dates. I'm sorry. In later years, it did come north along Van Nuys Blvd across what is now Parthenia street and then followed Supulveda Blvd along into Brand and on into San Fernando. We were able to catch it down at the end of the street. That was a number of years after my father had been traveling for several years. He had to go clear into Van Nuys to get it.

Dodson: How did he travel back and forth?

Porter: Well, in the first, in the ~~most~~, I think, ever since I can remember we had a model T Ford. Every two years we got a new model T Ford. I can remember getting dumped out of the Model T Ford on Roscoe Blvd on day. But it was only a dirt street in those days. Roscoe wasn't a paved Boulevard in those days. It wasn't until 19, the middle 1930's that they paved it. '29 or the early '30's is when they paved Roscoe Boulevard for the first time. We lived on a dirt street all those times and when you think of Roscoe Boulevard today it's hard to believe but. And then, only in the more recent years even, say, 20 years has it been cut completely across the valley. In the old days you went down through the wash and it wasn't even bridged

or anything. We really lived out in the country.

Burmeister: Did Roscoe go over a wash?

Porter: Yeah, well, Roscoe goes over a wash into Panorama City. It crosses the Pacoima wash in the, um hum, and there has been days when the wash went over it banks too. During the flooding time, when we had heavy rains. As dry as we've had it this year it's hard to believe but the L.A. river goes over its bank every once in awhile too.

Burmeister: What was the religious life like in the valley?

Porter: Well, as far as I can recall it's the same as it is today. There's a great many more churches but it was Protestant and Catholic. I do not remember Jewish temples in the valley at that time, which we do have now. We happen, you see, in those days too, everything was done in Van Nuys for the area we lived in. We went to school in Van Nuys. We went to church in Van Nuys. We shopped in Van Nuys. Everything was in Van Nuys. So, we went into Van Nuys to church. The Presbyterian Church. In the early 1920's people in the Supulveda area, which was then Mission Acres. It wasn't called Supulveda, decided they wanted a church of their own so they started to look to try to organize a church in this area. I think it was in the early '20's they did establish a church. A meeting house. As I say, Van Nuys was where the Catholic church was. So, then, we started to go into Van Nuys to church until I was about eight years old and then we started going



out into this area to church. Mission Acres was first established as a, a, they built houses on an acre lot to raise chickens. They enticed people out here to start a chicken ranch, and they'd sell em a house with an acre of land. That's the way Mission Acres was began. It is now Supulveda, of course. So, everybody had an acre of land and a little ol house to live on out here. And their chickens. So, it was as I say, a little ranching, an agricultural community.

Dodson: I imagine the first churches were Catholic in the valley. Were they not? Since the first settlers were Catholic.

Porter: I would assume so, although, in my day we always went to Presbyterian church. Now, of course, my father was Catholic background but he never went to church when he came to California. And from my earliest recollections we were all baptized in the Presbyterian church so, my earliest days are remembering only the Protestant church that we attended. But, there was a Catholic church in Van Nuys. Saint Elizabeth's was then and it still is.

Dodson: Uh, where was the Methodist church located? Uh, Presbyterian that you went to? Where was that located?

Porter: Our Presbyterian church was located on Vesper and Sylvan street. Let's see. Vesper and fryer street. Vesper and Fryer street, where it still is today.



- Dodson: That's what I was going to ask, whether it was still standing.
- Porter: That's right. I do not think the whole building is still standing. I think that they have rebuilt there since those days, but the location of the church is on the same property.
- Dodson: How old is this particular church? The Methodist church we're in now?
- Porter: This church was established, uh, let's see, sixty years ago. It was first established in 1922, I think. That makes it about sixty-five years now.
- Dodson: Can you tell us anything about how church attendance has changed through the years since you have lived in the valley?
- Porter: Well, it fluctuates in this church. The same as in any church, I think, we find. Uhm, I think the times affect peoples attendance. If the times are hard, war times, this kind of thing, you find attendance going up. In hard times people tend to go to church. If things are easy, they find other things to do besides the church. Uh, stabilized attendance is, I don't think, an easy thing to find in any church. Now, we fluctuated up and probably came to our highest peak in the fifties. Yeah, in the late fifties early sixties. this church reached its peak, probably. Then, we've been going about fifteen hundred. Then, we've been gradually on a decline and now we find

ourselves going the other way. Starting the other way again.

Dodson: I think you're right, that religion flourishes more in times of adversity than in the other way around.

Porter: That's right. That's what we find. Very definitely and, uh, people, there's a stabilized group constantly in the church, but there's people that fluctuate with the times.

Burmeister: I think back in the early sixties it was a relatively peaceful time and so, uh, I was just wondering, how do you think their attendance was the highest then?

Dodson: Uh, do you have any answer for that, as to why attendance would have been highest at that time?

Porter: No, except that during those times I think, now I, I, I know that our church, particularly, was a very flourishing church. If you remember the San Fernando valley in those days were young families and we, our change, uh, our view of the pulpit area, particularly in the San Fernando valley, is changing. But, in those days it was young families with individual homes, living in individual homes. Since then we've changed to an apartment house area with blockage by the freeways, you see. This has affected the church and the membership a great deal.

Dodson: The young families, I imagine, would be having children that they would tend to send to Sunday School and that sort of thing. Do you think the falling birth rate is also a factor in affecting church attendance?

Porter: That could be but we don't find that in areas where there are still single dwelling families, you see. I think there's lots of things that are affecting it. One parent families has a lot to do with it. They don't find the church fitting to their needs, I don't think. Sometimes, I think we find ourselves in the churches, like everywhere else is a status type thing. They aren't really as open as they should be to all races, all creeds, all problems, you see. If people have problems they seem to turn from the church because they don't want to air their problems with people and this is too bad. I think we find this quite often, sometimes. Particularly where the moral structure is so degraded these days, you know, and people don't seem to live in marriage if they can live without it. They don't find, usually they don't tend to go to church. I think that has something to do with it.

Dodson: Would you say that when you were a teen-ager it was simply a natural thing, a customary thing for people to go to church?

Porter: Well, I would say, uh, I think there was a group that did and a group that didn't. Particularly,



in the crowd that we ran around with here in the area. We, there was our church group and then there was another group that did not attend church. I don't know. With me, it was just a natural thing to do. You got up on Sunday morning and you went to church. We were raised in a christian home and this was the thing to do. I remember, also, that as we grew up there was the group that did not have anything to do with the church or that were no connected with the church. So I think it's the same during those days as with anytime that certain people do, and are committed and certain people aren't.

Dodson: You wouldn't say that when you were a teen-ager that your people were inherently more religious than they are now? You don't see any difference?

Porter: No, I really don't see that difference. I think we, as youth, were respectful of property and things of that kind, but not because we were religious. That was just because we were disciplined in that way when we were growing up. You respected other people's property. And, I know in those days you could leave the doors of the church open and nobody would ever bother them. Now, you have to keep everything locked very tightly because you get vandalism. In the old days, one thing you could be sure of, no matter what kids did, they would never vandalize a church. Even though they were not in the church



themselves, they still respected the church as an institution within the community. I'm not sure the church is respected that well anymore.

Dodson: Can you tell us what sort of social life teen-agers had in the valley when you were in your teens?

Porter: Well, basically, we didn't spend money. [laugh] We didn't have it. Uh, we found things to do that didn't cost money, you know. We usually spent our evenings at different people's homes. Taffy pulls and cards. We still play cards although we do it at home. Shows? We didn't go to that many shows. There were shows around. The theater was here but we didn't go to it particularly. I can remember in the summertime we all went down to Crystal plunge which was owned by the Cornwall [sp?] family down on Kester street just north of Vanowen and that was the only plunge in the area. There was no public parks in those days or public pool. So, uh, we bicycled, we hiked. We did that sort of thing. It was just more of the things that we could find to do for free. We didn't do very many things that cost money.

Dodson: But, you found enough things that didn't cost money that you feel you had a happy time?

Porter: That's right. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. I, I think I felt. I think I probably grew up feeling I lived

a happier life than kids do nowadays. We were more free, I think. Course, we could go out and climb a tree, where kids today can't even do that. Hve dirt-clod fights and such things, you know. And kids today, you know, there's just not very much vacant land for children today to really enjoy, I think.

Dodson: So, you think things were a little simpler in those days but you had just as much fun?

Porter: Um Hum. Um hum. Maybe more fun because the pressure wasn't as great. I feel, really, our children and youth today have alot of pressure put on them for one reason or another. The standards of living, parents, there's not much of a home life, I don't think. That we had a great deal of even though that my father worked and was gone from home quite a bit we still felt like we had quite a family life. And I don't see this as much today.

Dodson: I'm a little tempted to ask Miss Burmeister who hasn't been out of teens very long whether she agree's with this? What she would say?

Burmeister: Well, uh, I wasn't back there then, so I have no way of judging.

Dodson: No, but you listened to what Mrs. Porter told us about what they did for recreation in those days. How would you say it differs from what

you do now?

Burmeister: What I did a few years ago?

Dodson: Yes.

Burmeister: Well, I had a couple of dirt-clog fights. And I climbed a few trees but not recently. Maybe about ten or fifteen years ago, probably.

Dodson: Since we're recording this for the future, we miswell get a comparison here. How did you spend your time when you were in your teens, would you say?

Burmeister: Teens or? Well, I didn't climb trees in my teens.

Porter: Do you feel things are more commercial maybe?

Burmeister: Yeah, I had beatle trading cards and records. This was when I was a teenager. Uh, I had a crush on my brother's little league coach. What else? Uh, I was quite an avid little league fan. Let's see, what else did I do? I was in Junior achievement. That was my big thing in high school. Let's see. In fact, that was my biggest projent. Junior Achievement. It was like a social club and work, you know. And uh, let's see. I was involved in sports. Uh. .

Dodson: The movies were mentioned. Did you frequently go to the movies?



Burmeister: Well, I've never been one to do that. My friends are, but I've never cared that much for movies in general. I can take them or leave them.

Dodson: How bout dances? Was that a frequent form of entertainment?

Burmeister: Oh! Yeah. I used to go to dances. Not all my friends did but I, in high school, had a kinda steady boyfriend. My friends didn't so we'd just automatically go to the junior prom or the coronation ball at his school or something. It wasn't necessarily common. It was dying out by then. It's still on the way out.

Dodson: Did you listen to what Mrs. Porter said? Did it seem to you very different from what you remember of your life in the teens? I'll bet you didn't do any taffy pulls or diddyou?

Burmeister: No. I've never done a taffy pull. I have chomped on one side of a piece of celery when somebody was on the other end though. Let's see. . .

Dodson: Well, did you feel it was much different then the way you remembered?

Burmeister: Well,

Dodson: For yourself?

Burmeister: What Mrs. Porter was describing, uh, sounds more

my childhood. When I'd go out and climb trees or go to the park and get in fights. Well, arguments. Dirt-clog fights or take short-cuts over people's fences but I didn't do any damage. I wouldn't do that now. Climbing tree's things like that. Although, I was never a very good tree climber.

Dodson: Well, thank you Miss Burmeister. I know you didn't expect to be interviewed but I thought we might as well put on the record what a teenager during this time does too. You're not very far from being a teenager so it's legitimate to ask you about it. Do you care to say anything else about that Mrs. Porter?

Porter: <sup>Q</sup> No.

Dodson: When you were in school did you have any special vocational aims? What sort of a career were you looking forward to?

Porter: Yes, I dreamed of being a journalist, which I never accomplished. The nearest I got was to putting out the church paper once a week. I think we all have dreams and that just happened to be one of mine. When I was in high school I was a very shy, very quiet person who nobody knew was there. As a matter of fact, even in the family, people, we would go somewhere and people would see my family and they would say to my mother, "oh, you have somebody else's child today" and she'd look around and say, "No." And they'd say "well, they'd never seen this one." It was always me.

So that's how shy I was. I'd always hide in the chicken house. One of the classes we had to do in high school, and it was a must, was one semester of public speaking. I forced myself to get a "D" in it so I wouldn't have to take it over again. I almost died that whole semester. So I really was a very quiet, shy person. I didn't do anything out of high school. I graduated from high school and was married right after high school. So, I never worked until I was divorced and then I had to go to work to take care of two children. So, in those days, let's see, I went into a record company. RCA. Finishing records. Then from there I went to Lockheed which was during the war, of course. There was a great demand for labor and I was "Rosie the Riveter." During that time also I remarried and my husband was in service and so I continued to work til he came home and then I still continued to work. I have been a church secretary off and on here for two different tonics. I was eight years as a church secretary before I quit to have a baby. Then I came back later on and went to work in the Nursery school and taught nursery school for twelve years. Now, I've been back as the church secretary again for five years.

Dodson:

Perhaps we should say, for the record, that Mrs. Porter is the secretary at the Sepulveda Methodist Church. Would you say then that you didn't hold any kind of a part time job when you were in school?



Porter: No. The only thing I did during the time I was in school was, I helped a lady with her housework that lived down the street from us. That was the only thing I ever did when we were going to school.

Dodson: Ah, among our students today part-time jobs are extremely common. In fact, most students hold them, I think. Would you say that that is a difference between now and the time when you were in school? Was holding a part-time job rather unusual at that time?

Porter: I don't think so. If you could get one. You must remember that I went through school during the depression years and they were very difficult. As a matter of fact, it was hard for even adults to get jobs. So, naturally, if they could get a job they weren't going to hire teenagers. So, jobs were very scarce, but there were odd jobs around as there are today but there were not as many because as I said, this was an agricultural area and there weren't that many places to find jobs. I don't recall my sisters or I working at all that I can remember. Not even my sisters. My brother did work in a gas station when he was in high school. I don't remember we girls, older girls, working when we were in high school.

Dodson: It would have been my feeling that among my classmates that probably part-time work was much less common than it is now.

Porter: That's what I would say too. I, I really don't recall my friends doing much of this and , as I say, I'm not really sure they would if they could've. There wasn't availability either. But we didn't have much money either. It wasn't because we had a lot of money that we didn't work.

Dodson: No, I think that was true among my classmates. But I can really only remember one that had a full-time job and the rest of us thought that was just unbelievable that he could go to school and have a full-time job. Yes, and there was an article about him in the newspaper it was so unusual. You can see how different that is from the situation now.

Porter:

Porter: Yes, that's true. Of course, we were raised also on a chicken farm. My father had anywhere from five to seven thousand chickens when we were children and, of course, he worked at a full-time job in Los Angeles and the ranch was left to mother and we children. So, that was pretty much time consuming because when we came home we had so many chores inside and so many chores outside which I find children don't all have today either. But we were required so many jobs inside and so many jobs outside. They were our chores to take care of and we had to take care of them. So there wasn't much time left to do anything away from home.

Dodson: Where was that chicken farm located?

Porter: That was on Roscoe boulevard in, which is now, well, about where Kester runs into Roscoe boulevard. It was on the corner of what would be Kester and Roscoe. He had five acres in there and he had a chicken ranch and walnuts and peach trees. We pretty well were self maintained.

Dodson: He sold that out for a subdivision then, did he?

Porter: No. Uhm, lets see, he gave all of us a lot to start with. So, that was the way most of it divided and then the whole place he sold which now has an apartment house on it. It's right next door to the Panorama Memorial Hospital. Also, you might be interested to know that in those days we did not have city water or city lights either. We used coal oil lamps and most people don't think of that in growing up in our day but we had coal oil lamps. We had a well on the property and the only thing I remember that seemed so much different was that most people had outhouses and we had a bathroom.

Dodson: Well, that sounds as though you were among the really affluent residents of the valley.

Porter: But, uh, I can remember that we had, once a week, we had to wash all the lamp shades and put em back on the lamps. Even after the city water came into the city we were forced to close our well but uhm, I can't remember the year, it must have been in the late '20's, the city water



was, uh, something got into the city water and it was, uh, not good. So they came around and asked people like my father if they could open the well and so many people, uh families, could come and use our well for their water supply until they could get the city water back in good use again.

Dodson: Well, was there enough ground water in the valley to keep your well running continuously?

Porter: It was a deep well and it was beautiful water, beautiful water, oh yes. And we would've continued to use it except that the city wasn't getting any revenue that way. So, yeah, we had an old well-house with a big tank, a storage tank, on top and everything. That was in my late teens early twenties that I remember we had that.

Dodson: Do you recall how the water was pumped up from the well? Did you do it by hand or did you have a windmill?

Porter: No, we had an old hand pump and we did it by hand. The old wheel was a hand wheel and we<sup>2</sup> just did it ourselves. It never seemed to be a real chore. It always came real easily.

Dodson: Do you recall when electricity came into your house for the first time?

Porter: No, I don't. That's the interesting part. I

can't remember when the changeover was. I can remember coal oil lamps but I don't remember electricity and I don't remember when it was, uh, that's why I say dates just leave me cold. I'm not good with dates.

Dodson: And you don't remember when water was piped into your house? When you weren't dependant on the well?

Porter: No, I don't remember that at all. I remember that we were forced to do it. I do not remember when it was?

Burmeister: That's interesting that if you had indoor plumbing that you didn't have water indoors.

Porter: Did we have water? No, I guess in the old days we didn't. Originally I wouldn't, uh, I don't think we would've.

Dodson: I presume then that you carried the water from the well into the house.

Porter: Yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Dodson: I've seen farmhouses where there would be a pump coming up into the house.

Porter: Yes. No, no, we didn't have that. No, it was outside, the well water.

Dodson: Can you tell us anything about any great historic events you've witnessed since you've been in the valley and how you reacted to them? Uh, for example, the two World Wars. Do you remember the first one at all?

Porter: [laughing] I was very young in the first World War. As a matter of fact, I was only a few months old when it quit.

Dodson: [laughing] That's a legitimate reason for not knowing anything about that one.

Porter: I don't remember the first World War. The second one, yes I do because we were involved in that so greatly. All of our young men were going to war at that time and I, my husband was in the service. My brothers-in-law were all in the service. My brother was in the service. My mother was a person who worked for the USO and she was always a very warm and loving person so our home was always open to anybody. Never was there a time when there was not servicemen going or coming through our house. Going or coming from somewhere. Of course, my mother had six daughters so it's understandable why there would be so many servicemen going and coming from our house. As far as the actual effect of war, I don't remember anything too dramatic about it.

Dodson: I think you mentioned that you worked in a war. .



Porter: I worked at Lockheed during the war building planes. The only thing that frustrated me was it was a cost plus. If you remember so many things that were cost plus at that time. So, you were hearing the boys crying for planes and no, no, no you could only build one plane today. You can't build any more because the government won't pay you. So, that was rather frustrating to me personally because I felt that we needed to get the planes out there and still they'd slow you down because . . .

Burmeister: Q What is cost plus?

Porter: Government cost plus is where, you know, if you built too fast then you didn't get the money, you know, if you're building too. They slowed you down so they could make more money, you see.

Dodson: That is an interesting side light on the war. I knew that there was a cost plus system but I didn't know that it worked in that particular way.

Porter: Well, I didn't either until I went to work at Lockheed. But, uh, so, uh, that's as far as it really affected me and of course, there was sugar rationing, gasoline rationing, those kinds of things but we never seemed to be short of coupons which we did have for gas and for sugar. Mainly because we were a large family and we shared together that we worked this out.

- Dodson: I think that probably did help, pooling those coupons in that particular way. Was it unusual at that time for women to work in a factory such as Lockheed?
- Porter: No, no, no, no, no, because the men, there were so many men gone. There were great numbers of women working at that time.
- Dodson: No, I mean before that time. There hadn't been very many working in a plant like Lockhee?
- Porter: No, I doubt that there would have been. Yeah. I doubt if there would have been. I personally hadn't been there. See, I didn't go there until after the war. I would have questioned, as a matter of fact, I can remember the effect of women out a Lockheed when I think about it. This was quite a thing to have some girl helping you. I can remember one fella, he wasn't gonna work with a woman so, I can remember. Yes, yes it was new.
- Dodson: Well, did you convince him that it was a good idea?
- Porter: Well, I'm not sure that I did, but I'm sure that in numbers we did.
- Dodson: I imagine there was a little feeling of that kind because it was something new at the time.
- Porter: That's right, and the fact that most men, at that

time, didn't feel that women could do the same job that men could do. It was a very strong feeling and still, we worked side by side. They soon learned that women could do the same type of work.

Dodson: Well, were you exactly given exactly the same type or were you given lighter work would you say during the war?

Porter: No!! We worked together as teams and I worked almost all the time with a man as my partner. We were working side by side. We were climbing inside and outside and up on top of the planes and toward the end I was working on the wing section out on the field. So, I don't think that, uh, the only thing you didn't see were very many women in personnel or supervisory positions. That wasn't something they did but we did get paid the same. That was quite a step too, forward, because for many years they didn't think women should be paid the same as men even though they did the same work. Women's lib fought this battle for alot of years but I still don't believe in womens lib. I believe women have the same right as men as far as job opportunities but there's alot of things about womens lib that I don't like. I like to be a lady, and to be treated like one.

Dodson: You still like to have the men open the door?

Porter: That's right! And pay the bill.



Burmeister: That sounds pretty good. Get equal pay and get them to pay your share too.

Porter: [laughing] Yeah.

Dodson: Do you remember the armistice and how it was celebrated here in the valley, or what happened?

Porter: I don't remember any, really too much about it. My husband tells me more about it. He happened to be returning from European fields when the armistice was signed. He was in Louisiana and told about a lot of celebration and I don't remember that much, personally. I think I was just too busy working and raising the family to get too, I didn't do much socially in those days and I wasn't found in the bars, so. That's where most of the excitement was. I know we were very excited because we felt they'd all be coming home and still they would be coming home too, some didn't. Ours all did.

Dodson: Your husband was in the European theater then?

Porter: My husband went in through Africa and up in through the European field.

Dodson: Did you have any relatives in the Pacific area?

Porter: No. My brother-in-law was in Pearl Harbor when the bombs were dropped in Pearl Harbor. He was aboard the U.S.S. San Francisco. He served aboard the U.S.S. San Francisco in that area, out in the Asian field, some parts of it. The rest of our family was all in the European area.

Dodson: You remember your reaction when you got the news of Pearl Harbor? Do you remember what you were doing or how your family reacted to it or how the community reacted?

Porter: I particularly remember we did because we returned home from church on Sunday morning and the news was on. The news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And of course, as I say, my brother-in-law was in San Francisco. I mean, in Pearl Harbor. And my sister was living there at the same time. So, it was a very personal thing to us because we were not aware of how damaging, uh, everything had been done. What damage had been done and, course there was no communication for quite some time and we didn't know and we were wondering what this would detail as far as the real situation. It was very calm. A kind of a still type of thing. Wondering, you know, just what type of a reaction we were gonna have. I can remember very well going home from church on Sunday morning and that was the news. We had all been in church, of course, when it happened.

Dodson: There wasn't any announcement in church?

[ The tape stopped at this point and the question was never answered.]

Burmeister: Mrs. Porter, do you remember the 1971 earthquake?

Porter: I remember that one. I remember a couple before that one too. Uh, the '71 earthquake did very little damage to us personally, but even way back to the earthquake that was in the '30's, the Long Beach earthquake as they called it, Uh, I remember at that time, we were children then, and I can remember them telling us that you would not get that much damage in the San Fernando Valley because we were on a sandy loam and this property gave more then other areas would give. You weren't on a rocky base, you see, and so the damage would not be as great. We, personally, have never felt any real damage from any of the earthquakes. The Long Beach earthquake, or the Tehatcepi [sp?] earthquake in the '50's, or from the one in the '70's. We had minor damage but nothing critical. I can particularly remember the '39 earthquake. We were, it was during the day and the Walnut trees seemed to sway back and forth almost touching the ground in the valley. They were swaying, you know.

Dodson: Was that the Long Beach quake?

Porter: Yes, that was the Long Beach quake. So, you could watch them sway. We all, of course, went out doors and stayed out of the house. You could almost watch things give rather than break. Then, the '50 earthquake. I can remember that happening at night or in the early morning hours. I was alone at the time with the children. We happened to have property on, uh, by Gorner [?] back up on the ridge. My husband worked up there.



I can remember the bed going across the floor at night, and the baby's crib. The, uh, what's the thing you call it? On top of the telephone pole? Transformers! Going out. You could see these glass things, you know. Big [inaudible] and you weren't aware, at first, as to what was going on. We heard that there was a big earthquake and, uh, it so happened that being at Gorner he was nearer to the Tehatchepee range than we were. When he got up the next morning and looked out at highway 99 there was no traffic and he thought he was the last person on the earth, you know, left living.

Dodson: Well, I think, Mrs. Porter, that you are the first one who has mentioned that the Long Beach earthquake was felt here in the valley. So, we are very much interested in that.

Porter: My brother came running out with a towel out of the bathtub. Stark naked. [laughing] Oh no, it was felt. Definitely felt.

Dodson: Well, do you care to tell us anything more about your impressions of the earthquakes that you mentioned? None of them did any real damage in the area in which you lived?

Porter: No, No, no, we had no damage. As a matter of fact, the one that really was the hardest hit, I think, for this area was the 1971 earthquake. I, I, we just had a couple of broken dishes, that's all. And we still lived in this area, you see, so.

Dodson:

It's amazing that that earthquake was so severe in the northern part of the valley and yet didn't affect the central and southern parts hardly at all.

Porter:

I think, once again, this brings out the fact that what they said in the past years was the sandy loam in the valley. It breaks a lot of the damaging part of the earthquake. It rolls with an earthquake rather than actually the jarring of an earthquake, you see. This has been borne out in the earthquakes that we've had. Now, the damage wasn't so bad even for these people that were evacuated. That was the fear of the breaking of the dam. They evacuated the property. It wasn't because it had that much damage.

Dodson:

Was this in an area that was evacuated? It was not, was it?

Porter:

The Church was. My home wasn't. I lived east of Sepulveda Blvd and west of Sepulveda Blvd was evacuated. I happened to be sitting at my desk the day they evacuated the area and they came through and said, "will everyone in the area please leave." So, I left. Then I came back the next day and the street was blocked off and I told them where I was going and they let me back in. I went back to work.

Dodson: I don't recall exactly what did happen to the dam. It didn't really break, did it?

Porter: No, it did not. It's a dirt dam and, uh, if you remember, and they were afraid that it would, but it did not. They drained it as rapidly as they could and took the pressure off. There were some cracks that they were afraid were going to cause some problems.

Dodson: Has that dam been, uh, rebuilt or anything? Is water still being stored up there at the present time?

Porter: No. They are just now restoring a new basin up in that area and getting ready to refill and that type of thing. I think it's structured a little differently than it was at the time of the earthquake. I don't know exactly what the structure is because I haven't paid that much attention to it.

Dodson: Well, can you think of any other historic event that took place that affected the valley?

Porter: Floods. We have had a few floods that were pretty devastating. One that I can remember very well was the Pacoima Wash that went on down and fed into the L.A. river area, and the Tujunga Wash, and it washed out a



great deal of North Hollywood. I can recall watching, it seems like I was in my teens, when that happened. Things like, uh, a refrigerator door. That was all you saw that was left of a refrigerator, and whole houses, whole apartment houses were completely washed away. This is hard for some people to believe about the valley. They never seen that much water in the valley. Until the flood control within the last few years, Sepulveda Boulevard, everytime it rains, is a river. A river. You couldn't cross Sepulveda Boulevard hardly because of the water. The valley was always pretty much inundated with water when it rained.

Dodson: Would you say that floods were really a greater menace than earthquakes?

Porter: I, well, they came about the same amount of time. You didn't have them very often. They were devastating when they came, but we didn't have them very often. I don't think we've had any more floods than we've had earthquakes, really. As far as I'm concerned. I think the damage of floods we saw a little bit more, because we were in the area a little bit closer, but, uh. .

Dodson: When was the flood that you talked about that damaged North Hollywood? You say it practically destroyed it, or wiped out a

great part of it?

Porter: One area. One area of North Hollywood was damaged a great deal. I can't remember. As I say, I think I was in my teens. So that must have been in the late '30's. Somewheres. And then there was one in the '50's that did a great deal of damage. My father bought property in the valley in the rainy season because he said that we would never be bothered with water, and we never were, so, when the wash gave, it went the other way. He knew that was gonna happen, he said.

Dodson: He bought his property when he could see where the water was going to go, huh?

Porter: That's right. My father was a very shrewd business man.

Dodson: Well, I think that was a very smart thing to do.

Porter: Even then, most people thought he'd lost his mind to buy property in the San Fernando Valley in the (inaudible). They thought that property was never going to be worth anything. My, uh, his boss told him he thought he was the craziest man he ever knew. Twelve years later he bought in North Hollywood and thought my father was the smartest man he ever knew for having bought property in the teens.

Dodson: I'd like to ask you about the depression of 1929-1933. The Great Depression. How did that affect your family?

Porter: We were not as affected as other families were. I can remember it affecting people very strongly when their fathers were out of work. My father happened to have a job all through those years. He worked Downtown Los Angeles the old Hamburgers, which later became the May Company. He had worked for May Company in the east and (inaudible) father May had asked him to come to work for him. He said, "when you move to California, I'll come to work for you." May came to California and bought the store my dad was working in. He didn't have to change jobs, he just continued to work for him. So, my father had a job all through the depression. As I say, it wasn't big pay and we had seven children, so you know that we weren't that easy off. We had our chicken ranch. We had our own garden; fruit trees and nut trees. So, we, really, as I say, I don't think that we had as big a struggle as some people did. I can remember I had two dresses; one in the wash and one to wear during those days. I can remember that we didn't have a lot of material things, but we were a very close family and so we had lots of relationship that way. If I, uh, uh, I could probably feel like I've been through a lot of things, but I realize, as I have matured, probably, that we had a lot to be grateful for that



other people didn't.

Dodson: You recall the plight of any of your neighbors who were out of work or in trouble financially during that period?

Porter: No, because as I say, we were in a farm size area and neighbors weren't that thick. There were very few neighbors and most of our neighbors were able to maintain themselves with gardens and chickens and that kind of thing. We ate an awful lot of chicken and an awful lot of eggs, but at least you were eating. I really don't recall ever feeling like we were really put out at all. I do remember it was hard times and a struggle for lots of people.

Burmeister: Do you recall seeing any bread lines or anything like that?

Porter: No, I didn't. I don't recall of any of that at all that I really, personally recall at all.

Dodson: That must have been more characteristic of the East than the West, because we haven't found anyone who has seen anything like that.

Porter: I think it had more to do with heavily

populated areas, you see. As I say, the valley in those years was not heavily populated. See, that all came after World War II.

Dodson: I imagine you were better off having a rural situation and farms where you could produce things for yourself.

Porter: That's what I would have thought, yes. I feel for sure, that this would be true. Yes. Yes.

Dodson: It would be the people living in cities who have lost their jobs that would be in more trouble.

Porter: I can remember one Christmas we had an orange and might one other thing that we got for Christmas, you know. That didn't seem so bad to me, even then. Because, as I say, we were not used to material things the way that our kids are. I'm not sure that it's been the best thing that our kids have had so many material things either. I think, sometimes, it's better to come along without as much. You appreciate what you get more.

Dodson: So, you don't feel that you were really deprived to any great extent?

Porter: No. At this stage in life, I feel like it was a good education.

Burmeister: Do you remember any differences in the appearance of the valley?

Porter: Well, as I say, it was all rural in those days. Now, you see very little of the rural part of the valley. Great deal of tumbleweeds in those days. Come to think of it, in the last year or two I haven't seen that many tumbleweeds for awhile through the valley. Orchards and Farm land now are, and in the last few years you see multiple dwellings, which we had none of. It was very rare to find an apartment house in the valley.

Burmeister: What about fashion?

Porter: Uh, well, those have changed a great deal. I think it's true of every generation that you see changes. We, uh, I remember when I was in high school our clothes were longer. Sort of like the mid-calf today. I find that these go around in cycles and pretty soon you come back to the same old thing, you know. I think because we were raised in the depression days, maybe we were more conscious of not wearing clothes like the kids wear nowadays. They don't seem to really care whether they got a hole in the seat of their pants, but we were so aware that that was a status thing when we were a kids that I'm sure we were



swore away from ever doing that, you know.

So, that is one thing I've noticed is a great deal of difference in.

Dodson: Would you care to say anything else about fashions, Mrs. Porter?

Porter: No, I don't think so. I don't recall anything real drastic. I remember the zoot-suit stage.

Burmeister: They did that here in the valley?

Porter: Oh, yeah. They did that here too.

Burmeister: What exactly is a zoot-suit? I sort of have an idea.

Porter: Well, just what I would call a baggy outfit. It's a dressed up affair, but it fit very loosely. Course, I think that alot of it seemed to be more predominant with the Latin people. We had those settlements in the valley. You know, we always have. Farm labor and that kind of thing.

Dodson: One characteristic of the zoot-suit was an extremely long coat I seem to remember.

Porter: That's right. That's right. It was supposed

to be very flashy.

Burmeister: The only thing I remember is that I read a book by the black, what's his name? Malcom X. He said that he wore a zoot-suit. Chartreuse, I think.

Porter: Coulda been. Coulda been. Anything bright and loud. Very jazzy.

Dodson: I don't think most men wore them though did they? Wouldn't you say that was the case?

Porter: Oh, no. No. This was a mod squad type thing.

Burmeister: I just can't imagine them being around here.

Porter: Oh, yeah. They go to all extremes, I think.

Dodson: Well, that sort of leads us into the next question. We were going to ask you what sort of fads you've been conscious of in the valley since you've lived here?

Porter: Oh, dear. I don't know. As I say, I'm not a conforming person as far as changes and these kinds of things are concerned. I can wear the same clothes I don't have to dress like everybody else. I don't have to eat like

everybody else. So I don't, I'm probably not as conscious of it as some people would be, you know. But, uh, uhm, I can't even think of any right off hand that were what I would call fads.

Dodson: Do you remember the sort of things the college students did, like climbing into telephone booths and so on?

Porter: Eating goldfish and ridin in bathtubs and that kind of thing, but that was . . .

Burmeister: (interrupts) Riding in bathtubs?

Porter: All stuff in a bathtub and ride down the street, yeah. Panty raids and that kind of thing. But that was all in the college group, and, of course, as I say, I got married out of high school so I wasn't in that group so. . .

Dodson: (interrupts) You didn't fit into that golden age of college life.

Porter: Yes. Yes. I missed all that. Probably just as well.

Dodson: I'm afraid Kathy missed most of that too. Most of those have died out.



Porter: Yes, most of them have.

Dodson: Well, what would you say as to morality now, between the time you were a teenager and the present?

Porter: Well, what we were talking about a little earlier. I feel that I have seen a great deal of change in that. I think that we were raised with respect for our elders, for property, for everything. I don't see this respect today. Course, in our own family, I also knew what a razor strap was, so. And if you got out of line your father knew how to use it. I never remember getting a lickin with it. So, I think parental discipline was much stronger. At least it was in our house, and I remember it was with my friends. My parents wanted to know where we were and what we were doing all the time. You really got put on restriction if you didn't do it. There was no half-way about it. I think this, I don't know, you just didn't do things that would hurt your parents for one thing. I don't think this kind of respect is there today.

Dodson: Were you under strict rules as to how soon you had to get back from a date and that sort of thing?

Porter: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Mother was sitting up waiting. My mother never went to bed until you got home.

Dodson: What sort of hours did you have?

Porter: I don't recall, but it was not late. I mean, we would always have to be in before midnight. They had to know who we were with and where we were going, what we were gonna do, time we were supposed to be back, and you better be where you said you were gonna be or you really were restricted. I don't feel that there was anything wrong with this. I don't find that that was wrong. My own children are not this well at this. My older children were. I have a split kind of family. There's seven years between our oldestes and our youngestes. I guess we were more rigid with our older ones. With our younger ones, they kinda conformed to the new morality more.

Dodson: You said they conformed. Did that mean that you had to conform to it?

Porter: No, no, I don't conform to anything.

Dodson: Well, I meant conform in the sense that you had to make some changes.

Porter: I won't even be accepting of it. My children

know what I expect of them and when they come home and do things at home they conform to our family pattern.

Dodson: One difference we've asked people about, and they all agree on, is the subject of narcotics. When they were in school this was practically unknown. Whereas, it isn't exactly unknown at the present time. Would you agree with that?

Porter: I, uh, we never heard about narcotics. Smoking, yes. Alcohol, yes. I don't remember anything of narcotics, or pills, or uppers, or downers, anything like that. I just was not part of our life at all. I can't recall ever having heard of a case of it when we were in school. I don't even remember anybody, even in an extreme situation that had ever, you know. Kids that were even more daring than everybody else, you know, didn't get involved in that. I don't remember hearing anything about it, no.

Dodson: Kathy, do you have any question you'd like to ask about that subject?

Burmeister: No. Uh, do you think that politics have changed very much?

Porter: I feel that people have become, well, that too has it's ups and downs. People have become



very indifferent, but I think the younger people have become more interested in politics than they were in our days. I don't remember that we were involved in political campaigns or that kind of thing, which I find young people today, which I think is good. I, uh, we were, once again, I was raised in a different type family. We, uh, you voted, you know. It was very important in your life. That was a privilege that you had and you voted. I can remember my father still voting and knowing what was going on in elections when he was 84 years old. He just was interested. He thought we should all be too. This was a very important thing in our family, particularly. As I say, I'm not sure it was with everybody but it was with us. I was very important to know what was going on and to take your rights seriously. You didn't have a right to complain if you didn't. The other thing we've found in this area. A lot of immigrants come into this area. Voting is very important, at least to them. I worked in the Polls, which is a very important thing, they feel this privilege even more than we do. This was something they never could do. They didn't have a voice on it. This was very important to them.

Burmeister: Do you have any particular instances that you regard, uh, well, what was the most historically important event that has happened in the valley?

Porter: Gracious, I don't even know. Uh, gold was found in the valley, I guess.

Dodson: That was a little before your time.

Porter: I'd say it was before my time too.

Dodson: It was back in 1842.

Porter: See, that was a little before my time. I don't really remember those kinds of things, you know. Everything is, I just enjoyed life as it came. I don't really remember anything that was so outstanding as that. Change has been a very strong feature in the valley but it's been a gradual thing. Sometimes you could see advantages and disadvantages. I liked the way of life in the old days but financially, probably, the progress has been good.

Burmeister: That's something that you've brought up that no one else has. Nobody else has mentioned change as perhaps the most dominant historical event, but perhaps you're right. Because that's the one feature about this valley that..

Porter: (Interrupts) It's been a pretty strong feature. I think it's the one that we have seen so much of. It's gone from a very rural to a less rural to a very

populated, a single family thing, to what's now a densely populated apartment house situation with an interracial balance. You see, I, uh, we were raised with Mexican-Americans because they were in the area but other than that, there were very little of any other races found in the valley. Now we have a smelting pot, really, within the valley.

Dodson: Has there ever been, in your opinion, any racial friction in the valley, or has the valley been free of that sort of thing?

Porter: Well, uh, there's always been, and I know when we were in high school the thing we felt particularly the strongest about was language rather than a racial. Because when the kids really wanted to put us on they spoke in Spanish and we objected to this. We felt they should be speaking English. I don't think there's been any real strong things. There's been some uprisings in the school situation and, uh, but not so great that it's been a real riot type situation. San Fernando had this. Van Nuys just had it a while back. We didn't have this when we were in school, you know. But we did, there were certain areas that we didn't go into, San Fernando is an example, because we knew that those were problem areas and it might create a problem if we were found there, you know. But we never really were involved in a racial type thing other than, as I say, we, personally, felt that this language thing.



They were talking about us so we wanted to know what they were saying, you know, type thing, when we were in high school.

Dodson: Well, that then never really was an issue in any sense in the valley?

Porter: No. I don't think so. I do know that some people felt very strongly when they built the Joe Louis and Armstrong built the section in Pacoima that was going to be for all the negro people, and that was felt that that was, until then I think the valley was fairly interracial mixed, you know. People lived where they wanted to and that, you know.

Dodson: Is there something that you can think of in valley history that brought you any kind of particular satisfaction or happiness? Or the reverse, any particular regret or sadness?

Porter: No. No, I personally have not enjoyed the change that we've had in the last few years with freeways and apartment houses and that kind of thing, but that's growth and you have to accept that. You know that has to come with the growth of the community. We've known for years that the San Fernando valley was a beautiful place to live and other people have found it out. So, here they come, you know. So, we have to accept this. We don't have to like it, particularly, but we have to accept

it.

Dodson: Would you still like to see it as it was when you first came here or when you had your earliest recollection as a rural area?

Porter: Well, I don't think I'd like to go quite that far back. Almost that far back. I would have liked to see my children raised in that kind of an atmosphere more than the kind of atmosphere they've been raised in. I think it was healthier for them. Woulda been. Less worldly goods and a little bit more of a scratch in the ground.

Burmiester Do you know any of the pioneers here in the valley or any of their descendants? Any of the Lankershims or, uh?

Porter: We didn't know the Lankershims. We knew the Whitsetts. The Whitsett children went to school with us.

Dodson: Could you tell us a little about the Whitsett family?

Porter: I don't know too much about them. They, practically owned Van Nuys in the days when my father bought from them. During the depression he tried to buy it all back or

take it all back, rather. Many people lost their property during the depression and Whitsett was very anxious to take it if he could get it. Luckily, my father was, as I said, had a good job and he maintained our property. He never lost it. We continued to be able to pick up a couple of other pieces after that. They owned a great deal of property. They owned all the property in what is now Allied Gardens and the Van Nuys Drive-In theatre. All that property was owned by Whitsett, but they owned a lot of property in the valley, but that, even in the later years, when we were older kids, they still owned that property. They owned a big home right in downtown Van Nuys. They owned Van Nuys boulevard from Hanes to Van Owen about. On the east side, the west side of Van Nuys boulevard they owned most of that property. Even when we were in high school and stuff.

Dodson: Is that home you speak of still standing?

Porter: No. No, it's where Von's market now lives today. It's all shopping now. There aren't many of the old homes. As a matter of fact, I think (inaudible).

Dodson: Are any members of that family still living in the valley, to your knowledge?

Porter: I really don't know. I really don't know



whether there were. I think there were some great-grandchildren living in the Van Nuys area but I'm not sure. I'm not aware of it. We didn't quite go with that class of people. We were more humble.

Burmeister: Can you tell how the valley came to be annexed to Los Angeles? Do you remember?

Porter: Because we were the city of Los Angeles for as long as I can remember. We have been the city of Los Angeles ever since we were living here, so, I guess that was before then.

Dodson: Now, we've been mentioning occasionally some of these houses that belonged to the earlier period of the valley. Can you tell us of any historic site or buildings that are still here?

Porter: I think most you'd find in the San Fernando area. I'm sure there's still a few homes in and around Van Nuys. Petit's property was still down in the old dam area but I don't remember for sure now whether that's still there or not. I haven't been down that way for awhile, but the old Petit home was where the dam area is now. It used to be that the old farm house was still in there. Last I knew, but, as I say, I haven't been down there in awhile. Uh, all the property of the Church of the Chimes, they still had a home that, as far as I knew, was one of the old homes. They

remodeled that and were using it as part of their social hall or something.

Dodson: Where is that located?

Porter: Magnolia and Hazeltine, I think it is.

Dodson: I see.

Porter: But, right off hand, as I think about it, I can't think of any others right now.

Dodson: Can you think of any significant changes or events, or anecdotes that you feel should be recorded but we haven't asked about?

Porter: No, I can't think of any. Most of them are very personal and they aren't for publication.

Dodson: Well, we're not going to delve into that kind.

Porter: We were mischievous when we were kids, at times but we didn't do things that kids do today.

Dodson: Well, I'm glad to know that you didn't set loose the fire hoses in schools.

Porter: No, we didn't do that. We didn't do that.  
All our horsing around was in the wide, open  
spaces.

Dodson: I'm afraid the type of mischief you got into  
wouldn't be considered very serious by today's  
standards.

Porter: No, no it wouldn't be. I'm sure.

Dodson: Well, we certainly thank you Mrs. Porter for  
your cooperation and all the time you've  
given us with this.

Porter: Uh, if it helps you any, Great. As I say, I'm  
not a real great person for remembering past  
because I live in the present and future, so.

Dodson: Well, we're very grateful and feel that we  
have some very valuable information here.  
Thank you very much.

This has been an interview with Mrs. Verna  
Porter, secretary of the Sepulveda Methodist  
Church. The interview took place on April  
14, 1976. It was conducted by Dr. James L.  
Dodson, curator of the Los Angeles Valley  
College Historical Museum and by Miss Kathy  
Burmeister, Museum Aide.